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(54) An item of footwear with removable decorative element

(57) An item of footwear of the type comprising a body of the footwear (11) and at least one decorative element (14), characterized in that means (16,17) are provided for removable attaching said decorative element (14) to body of the footwear (11). The decorative element can comprise light emission elements (26) actuated by an appropriate electric circuit (25).

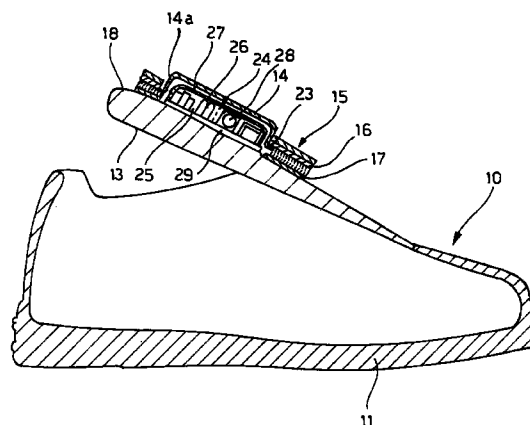


FIG. 2

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Description

The present invention relates to an item of footwear and more particularly to a shoe with at least one decorative element suitable for providing the shoe with a special ornamental quality.

Shoes of the type referred above and provided with a decorative element in the form, for example, of a face of an animal or of a cartoon character, and wherein said decorative element has been provided with light emission parts actuated by means of a suitable electric circuit positioned inside the main part of the shoe, are currently already known.

In these known shoes said decorative elements are generally provided on the tongue of the shoe and namely at the upper end of the latter which projects above the main part of the shoe, where they are fully visible and perform a significant ornamental function.

Such a type of shoe is especially, but not exclusively, dedicated to young customers, such as teenagers and children.

It is a known fact that fashion trends, in order to involve above all younger people in buying, force producers and retailers of fashion articles in general, and of shoes in particular, to change each year the models of the articles offered for sale, with the unfortunate result that a large quantity of articles which have been produced in excess and which have not been sold during the year of production are unlikely to be sold the following year.

This entails serious financial damage, not only for those in the industry, but also for the general public, due to the waste of resources required for producing unsold, and hence not used, batches of material, which could have been allocated otherwise to other uses of greater or equal utility.

The present invention sets out to remedy, at least in the area of footwear, what is referred above, in particular for those items of footwear provided with decorative elements which, by exerting a strong appeal on purchasers, may guide them towards one or the other shoe according to the ornament it bears.

It is also wholly evident that the tastes and choices of the purchaser can only be exactly known at the time of purchase of the footwear, and not before, for example when producing the footwear itself. Therefore it is impossible to plan in advance the number of articles of a given product which have to be manufactured. For the solution to the above mentioned problem to be effective, it is necessary therefore for it to be implemented by the retailer at the precise moment of selling the product. It must therefore be simple to implement and such that it does not require the use of special instruments or expensive equipment.

According to the present invention, the above can be achieved by providing, according to what is disclosed in claim 1, i.e. by means of an item of footwear of the type comprising a main part of the footwear and at least one decorative element, said item of footwear characterized

in that suitable means are provided for removable attaching said decorative element to said main part of the footwear.

The dependent claims relate to special and advantageous embodiments of the invention.

In this way it is possible to arrange, when buying, the required decorative element on the main part of the footwear.

By providing the retailer with a certain number of main footwear parts and a wide variety of decorative elements which can be engaged and disengaged therewith, it is possible to take steps so that, at the end of the sales season of the article, mainly the decorative elements alone, which can be engaged and disengaged with the main basic part of the item of footwear, remain unsold, and not a large quantity of whole items of footwear, as occurred to date. In this way a considerable saving is achieved in the quantity of material used for producing footwear, as also in the uses of energy and hours of work by staff required hitherto for producing footwear.

With the present invention an immediate advantage can also be achieved by purchasers who, should they intend changing the model or features of appearance of their footwear, no longer have to buy a new pair of shoes, but can simply and at a low cost buy a new ornamental element to be placed on the item of footwear in place of the one previously present thereon.

The features and advantages of the present invention will in any case be made clearer by reading the following description which relates to preferred embodiments of the invention.

The following description must be read with reference to the accompanying drawings, in which:

Figure 1 is a perspective view of a shoe made in accordance with a first preferred embodiment of the present invention;

Figure 2 is a sectioned view of the shoe according to the first preferred embodiment of the present invention;

Figure 3 is a plan view from above of the tongue alone of the shoe of the first preferred embodiment with the decorative element attached;

Figure 4 is a plan view from above of the decorative element and of the flat support strip which can be attached removable to the tongue of the shoe according to the first preferred embodiment of the present invention;

Figure 5 is a plan view from above of the shoe of the first preferred embodiment, not provided with the decorative element, showing the part of the means for removable attachment which are positioned on the tongue itself, as well as the light emission apparatus;

Figure 6 is a plan view from below of the decorative element and of the support strip which can be attached removable to the tongue of the shoe according to the first preferred embodiment of the present invention;

Figure 7 is a sectioned view of the shoe made in accordance with the second preferred embodiment of the present invention;

Figure 8 is a plan view from above of the removable portion of the tongue of the second preferred embodiment of the present invention;

Figure 9 is a plan view from below of the fixed portion of the tongue of the second preferred embodiment of the present invention.

Figure 1 illustrates an item of footwear 10, in the form of a sports shoe, comprising a main shoe part 11 and a tongue 12 which is positioned above the foot between the latter and the parts for fastening the shoe, in this case consisting of laces 13. As shown, the shoe 10 has a tongue 12 which is provided with said decorative element 14, which in the embodiment shown is given as an example as a tiger's face.

According to this first preferred embodiment, provision is made to attach removable said decorative element 14 to the main footwear part 11, using a special support element 15 which is connected in an engageable and disengageable manner to the main shoe part 11.

Also referring to the other Figures from 2 to 6, it can be seen that the support element 15 is in the form of a flat element having a hole in the centre for housing the decorative element 14, in such a way as to provide a sort of frame or flat strip which surrounds and firmly restrains said decorative element. The internal edge 15a of the flat support strip 15 is parallel and positioned near to the external edge 14a of the decorative element 14.

For removable attachment of the decorative element to the shoe, attachment means are then provided comprising a first and a second part 16, 17 respectively which can be coupled one to the other and which are integral with said strip 15 and with the surface of the footwear respectively, in this case, in the preferred embodiment shown here, with the upper surface 18 of the tongue 12 of the shoe.

As shown, said means for removable attachment are, in this embodiment, formed by a Velcro (trademark) type tape and comprise a first portion of Velcro tape, defining the first part 16 of the attachment means, attached below the flat support strip 15 of the decorative element 14 and a second portion of Velcro tape, defining said second part 17 of the attachment means, which is suitable for coupling with said first Velcro portion and is attached on the upper surface 18 of said tongue 12.

The attachment system known on the market by the name "Velcro" is a system fully known to an expert in the field and it is not considered necessary therefore to describe it here in detail.

In the embodiment shown, said portion 17 of the Velcro tape provided on the upper surface 18 of the tongue 12 has a configuration which exactly matches the shape of the support element 15 and of the first Velcro strip 16 borne by it. It is attached to the surface of the footwear by yarn stitches. Two stitches 19 and 20 are placed near

and parallel respectively to the outer edge 21 and the inner edge 22 of the second portion 17 of the Velcro tape.

In the same way, the decorative element 14 is attached to the flat strip 15 and to the first portion 16 in Velcro tape of the attachment means, as shown, by sewing with yarn along the corresponding inner and outer edges. More particularly, it is clear in Figures 2 and 6 how the stitching provided at the inner edges additionally connects a lower perimetral undercut 23 of the decorative element 14 positioned below the first portion 16 of the Velcro tape, so as to connect the decorative element 14 to the support element 15.

The strip 15 is in a flexible material, for example leather or another material normally used for making the upper of shoes, but could also be provided in any other type, for example in a rigid or plastic material.

According to a further feature of the invention, in the case wherein it has been foreseen to use, as shown in the present preferred embodiment, light emission apparatus 24, positioned below the decorative element 14, made in a transparent material and actuated by the walking of the wearer of the item of footwear, provision is made to attach the apparatus 24 for light emission directly to the upper surface of the item of footwear, i.e. to the upper face 18 of the tongue 12.

In this case, in order to insulate the electric circuit and protect it from the outside, the second part 17 of said means for removable attachment, which are provided on the upper face of the footwear, are arranged around said light emission apparatus 24.

Said apparatus 24 comprises an electric circuit designed to actuate suitable light emission devices.

Said light emission apparatus 24 is of a wholly known type and is not therefore described in detail here. It comprises, as shown more particularly in Figure 2, light emission parts 26 such as luminous leds or bulbs, connected by means of a suitable electric circuit 25, which can be produced by any expert technician, and supply batteries 28. The whole is supported by a rigid support plate 29.

As shown, said light emission apparatus 24, covered by a layer of transparent synthetic material 27 such as for example silicone, is attached to the surface of the footwear by means of sewing yarns, denoted by the reference numeral 28 in Figure 5.

In addition to protecting the components of the light emission apparatus, the layer of silicone also maintains the supply batteries properly anchored to the latter. The proposed solution is further advantageous in that, by simply removing the decorative element and its support element, access is immediately gained to the light emission apparatus and it is thus possible to replace the run-down batteries. It is sufficient to remove the part of the silicone layer which covers the batteries and return it after having placed the new, charged batteries in position.

A considerable reduction in the number of light emission apparatuses which would however have to be used according to the prior art is achieved. According to the

present solution each interchangeable decorative element no longer has to be provided with a corresponding optical emission apparatus, instead it is sufficient to provide a single illumination apparatus for each shoe with a considerable lowering in the costs borne by manufacturers.

The processes for placing the light emission apparatus 24 are simpler and faster for the present invention and do not cause that permanent damage to the shoe entailed by making cuts and openings in the footwear, as had to be performed hitherto when the apparatus 24 had to be installed in the footwear. In known items of footwear in fact the apparatus 24 was embedded in the footwear, and cuts had to be performed for its insertion inside the main footwear part and windows to allow illumination of the decorative element.

The simple cutting of the yarns 28 allows furthermore rapid removal of the apparatus 24 without leaving indelible traces on the upper face of the tongue 12.

It could also be foreseen, according to the present invention, to attach said light emission apparatus 24 to the surface of the shoe by parts which allow removability thereof. In this way it is possible to replace optical emission apparatus which is faulty or malfunctioning with new apparatus in perfect working order, or in any case to allow the user to engage or disengage the light emission apparatus 24 with the tongue 12 at his or her discretion according to the needs of the moment.

For example the light emission apparatus 24 may be attached to a first portion of a Velcro tape, with a second portion of the Velcro tape which can be coupled with the first which is integral with the surface of the footwear in a substantially similar manner to what is shown for attachment of the decorative element 14.

In this way the decorative element may be detached individually from the footwear without taking with it any portion of the footwear itself, and said light emission apparatus, in such a way as to provide an interchangeable decorative element which has a particularly low cost.

It is thus possible for the user to remove the decorative element simply and rapidly and attachment of the decorative element onto the shoe is sufficiently firm and safe, such as to prevent undesirable detachments from occurring.

It is naturally understood that, according to the invention, it can also be foreseen to provide an element for supporting the decorative element with a different configuration from that shown, and also to use means for disengageable attachment which are different from the aforementioned Velcro tape.

Figures 7 to 9 illustrate a second preferred embodiment of the present invention.

Figure 7 shows more particularly an item of footwear 110 in the form of a sports shoe comprising a main part of the shoe 111 and a tongue 112 which is positioned, above the foot, between the latter and the parts for fastening the shoe, in this case consisting of laces 113, and of the type wherein the tongue 112 of the shoe is pro-

vided with said decorative element 114 which, also in the second embodiment shown here, is given as an example as a tiger's face.

According to the invention provision is made to connect removable said decorative element 113 to the main part of the shoe. According to this preferred embodiment, the decorative element 113 is attached removable to the shoe 111 by providing an independent portion 114 of said tongue 112 whereon said decorative element 113 is placed and a portion 115 of said tongue 112 which is attached firmly to the main part of the shoe 111. Suitable reciprocal attachment means are arranged between the portion 114 and the portion 115, suitable for allowing removal of the portion 114 and its replacement with another similar portion nevertheless having another decorative element.

According to the present invention it could likewise be foreseen to arrange said means, suitable for attaching removable said decorative element, directly between said tongue and said main part of the shoe, in the case wherein the tongue consists of a single main part and bears the decorative element.

According to the preferred embodiment shown in the figures, said means for removable attachment are in the form of press-studs 116, suitable for making the coupling particularly simple and rapid to perform. Said press-studs 116 each have a first coupling element 116a, arranged on said fixed portion 114 of the tongue, and a second coupling element 116b, designed to engage with and disengage respectively from said first element 116a, arranged on said removable portion 114 provided with the decorative element 113.

As shown in Figures 7 and 8, said coupling element 116b of said removable tongue portion 114 provided with said decorative element 113 is preferably provided at the front end of said decorated portion, on the lower part of the same decorated portion 114 while, as shown in Figures 7 and 9, the corresponding coupling element 116a of said fixed portion 115 of the tongue is provided at the rear end of said fixed portion 115 on the lower face of the same fixed portion 115 of the tongue. The other end of this fixed portion 115 is firmly attached in 122 to the main part of the shoe 111, as shown. In this way the attachment means are completely hidden and do not affect the external appearance of the shoe in anyway.

In the preferred embodiment shown, said decorative element 113 in transparent material comprises a suitable light emission circuit 121 comprising light emission parts 117 actuated by a suitable electric circuit during walking of the wearer of the shoe.

Said light emission parts 117, like the actuation circuit, are fully known. Figure 7 shows, in addition to the light emission device 117, the circuit-holder plate 118, the two supply batteries 119, 119 and the switch device 120.

According to a further feature of the present invention provision is made to place said electric light emission circuit 121 fully inside the removable portion 114 of the

tongue 112, in a special housing concavity 123, open at the top and covered by the decorative element 14.

In this way it is possible to avoid the disadvantage shown by known shoes provided with a light emission device actuated by walking. In them in fact, once the supply batteries have run down, the illumination device being embedded inside the shoe and not accessible in any way from the outside, unless after having cut or split the same shoe, it was no longer possible to achieve any light emission.

It is possible with the present invention, once the batteries have run down, to replace the portion provided with the light emission device with a further portion having a same optical emission element, but with electrically charged illumination batteries, in order to provide a shoe wherein light emission can be guaranteed for the whole lifespan of the shoe itself.

It is naturally understood that what has been written and shown with reference to the preferred embodiments of the present invention has been given purely by way of a non-limiting example of the principle claimed. Obviously, as already referred, the innovative concept of the present invention is not applied exclusively, albeit preferably, to a shoe, but can be extended also to any type of footwear provided with at least one decorative element.

Claims

1. An item of footwear of the type comprising a body of the footwear (11, 111) having a tongue (12, 112) and at least one decorative element (14, 113), characterized in that means (16, 17; 116a, 116b) are provided for removable attaching said decorative element (14, 113) to body of the footwear.
2. An item of footwear according to claim 1, characterized in that said means (116a, 116b) for removable attaching said decorative element to the shoe are provided between said tongue (112) and said body of the shoe (111).
3. An item of footwear according to claim 1, characterized in that said means (116a, 116b) for removable attaching said decorative element to the shoe are provided between a portion (114) of said tongue (112), provided with said decorative element (113), and a portion (115) of said tongue (112) attached firmly to the body of the shoe (111).
4. An item of footwear according to any one of the previous claims, characterized in that said means (116a, 116b) for removable attachment comprise at least the two parts of a press-stud.
5. An item of footwear according to claims 3 and 4, characterized in that said press-stud has a first coupling element (116a), placed on said fixed portion (115) of the tongue, and a second coupling element (116b), designed to engage with and disengage from respectively said first coupling element (116a) on said fixed portion (115) of the tongue, placed on said removable portion (114) provided with the decorative element (113).
6. An item of footwear according to claim 5, characterized in that said coupling element (116b) of said portion of tongue (114) provided with said decorative element (113) is placed on the lower face of said decorated portion (114) and in that said coupling element (116a) of said fixed portion (115) of the tongue is placed on the upper face of said fixed portion (115) of the tongue.
7. An item of footwear according to claim 5, characterized in that said coupling element (116b) of said portion of tongue (114) provided with said decorative element (113) is placed at the front end of said decorated portion.
8. An item of footwear according to claim 5, characterized in that said coupling element (116a) of said fixed portion (115) of the tongue is placed at the rear free end of said fixed portion (115).
9. An item of footwear according to claim 1, characterized in that said decorative element (14) is attached firmly to a suitable support element (14a) and in that means (16, 17) are provided for attaching engageably and disengageably said support element (14a) to the footwear.
10. An item of footwear according to claim 9, characterized in that said means (17) for attaching engageably and disengageably said support element (14a) to the footwear are provided on the tongue (12) of the footwear.
11. An item of footwear according to claim 9, characterized in that said support element (14a) of the decorative element is in the form of a flat band element (15) which surrounds the decorative element (14) and is connected to the external perimeter of the decorative element (14) at its inner edge.
12. An item of footwear according to claim 9, characterized in that said means for removable attachment comprise a first coupling portion of the Velcro tape (16) on the surface below the support element (15) of the decorative element (14) and in that on the surface of the footwear a second portion of the Velcro tape (17) is attached, designed to couple with said first portion (16) integral with the decorative element, defining said second part of the attachment fastened to said shoe.
13. An item of footwear according to claim 12, characterized in that said second part of the means for

removable attachment (17) are provided on the upper surface of said tongue (18) of the shoe.

14. An item of footwear according to claim 1, wherein said decorative element comprises light emission elements (26, 117) actuated by an appropriate electric circuit (25, 121). 5
15. An item of footwear according to claims 3 and 14, characterized in that said electric actuation circuit (121) and said light emission device (117) are attached to the removable portion (114) of the tongue. 10
16. An item of footwear according to claim 15, characterized in that said electric actuation circuit (121) and said light emission device are housed fully inside a cavity (123) of the removable portion (114), said housing cavity (123) being open at the top and covered by the decorative element (113). 15
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17. An item of footwear according to claims 10 and 14, characterized in that said light emission apparatus (24, 26) of the decorative element is attached to the upper face of the tongue (18) of the footwear. 25
18. An item of footwear according to claims 12 and 14, characterized in that the second part of said removable attachment means (17) of said support element (15) of the decorative element (14) which are provided on the upper surface of the footwear are arranged around said light emission apparatus (24, 26). 30
19. An item of footwear according to claim 14, characterized in that means are provided for attaching said light emission apparatus (24) to the surface of the footwear engageably and disengageably. 35
20. An item of footwear according to claim 19, characterized in that said means for attaching said light emission apparatus (24) are provided between the support plate (29) of the light emission apparatus (24) and the upper face of the tongue (22) of the shoe. 40
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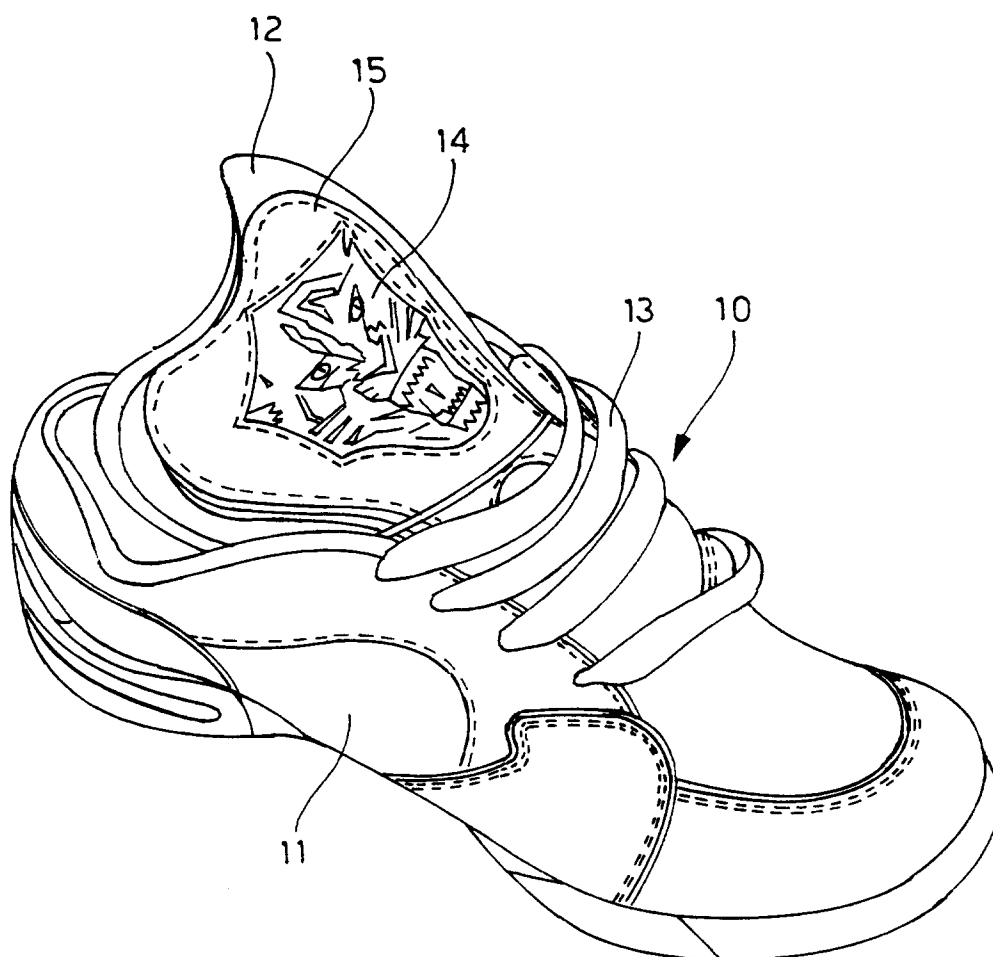


FIG. 1

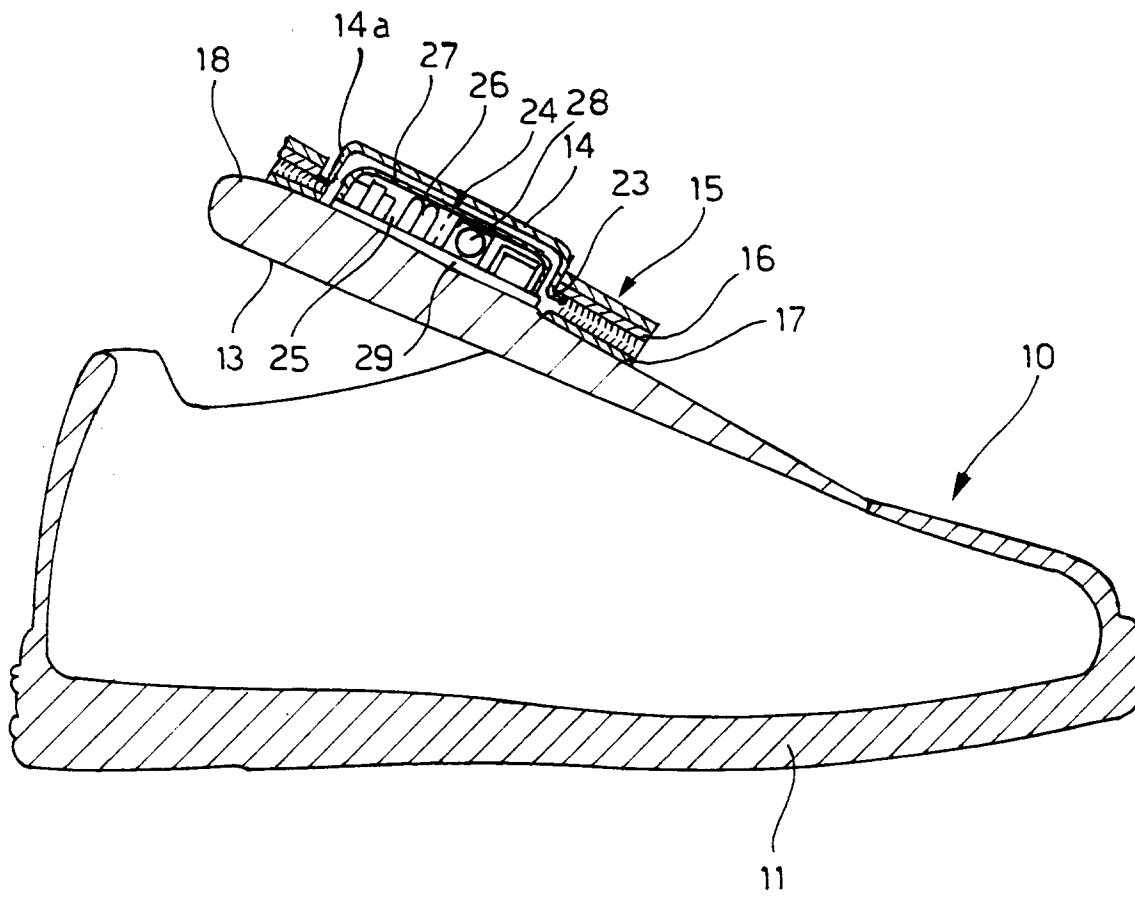


FIG. 2

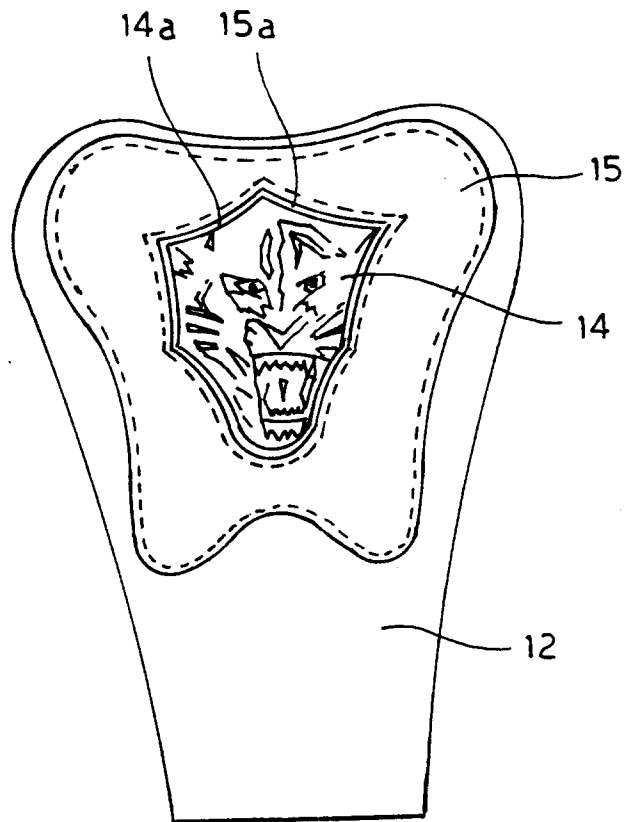


FIG. 3

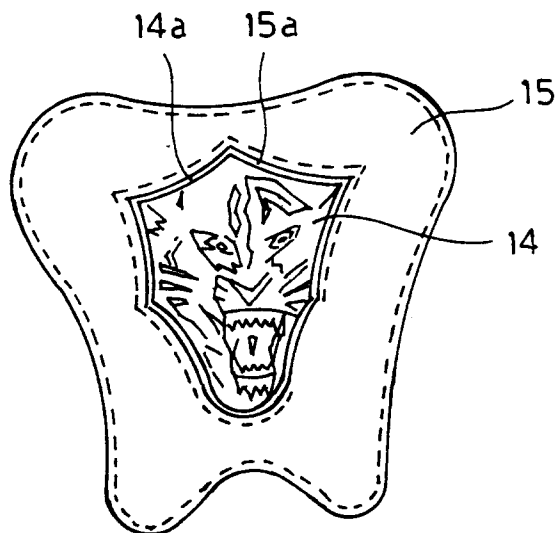


FIG. 4

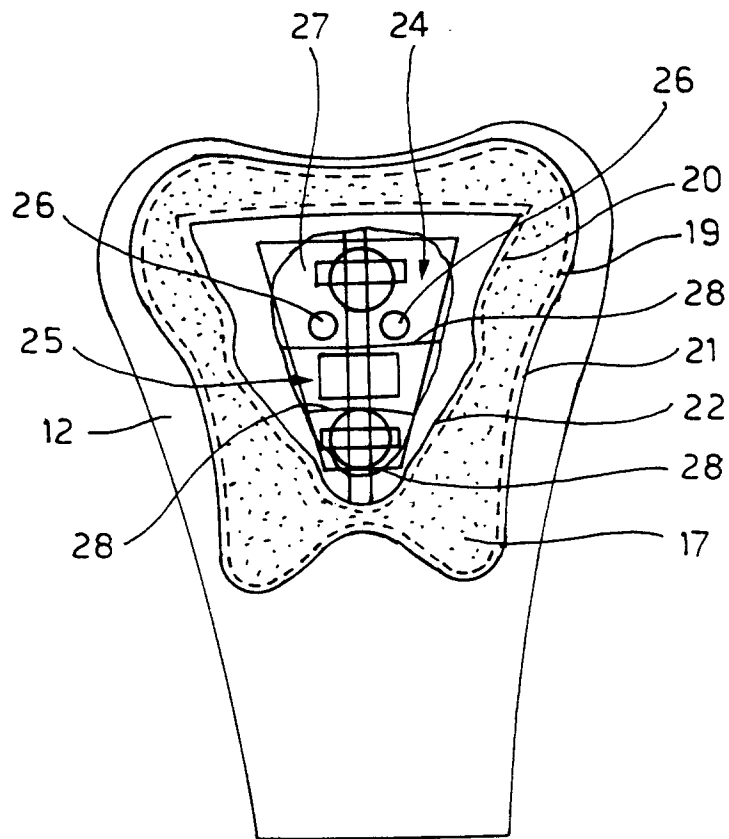


FIG. 5

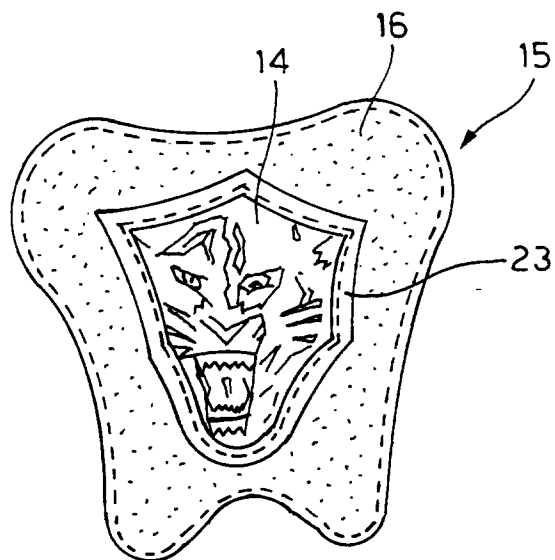


FIG. 6

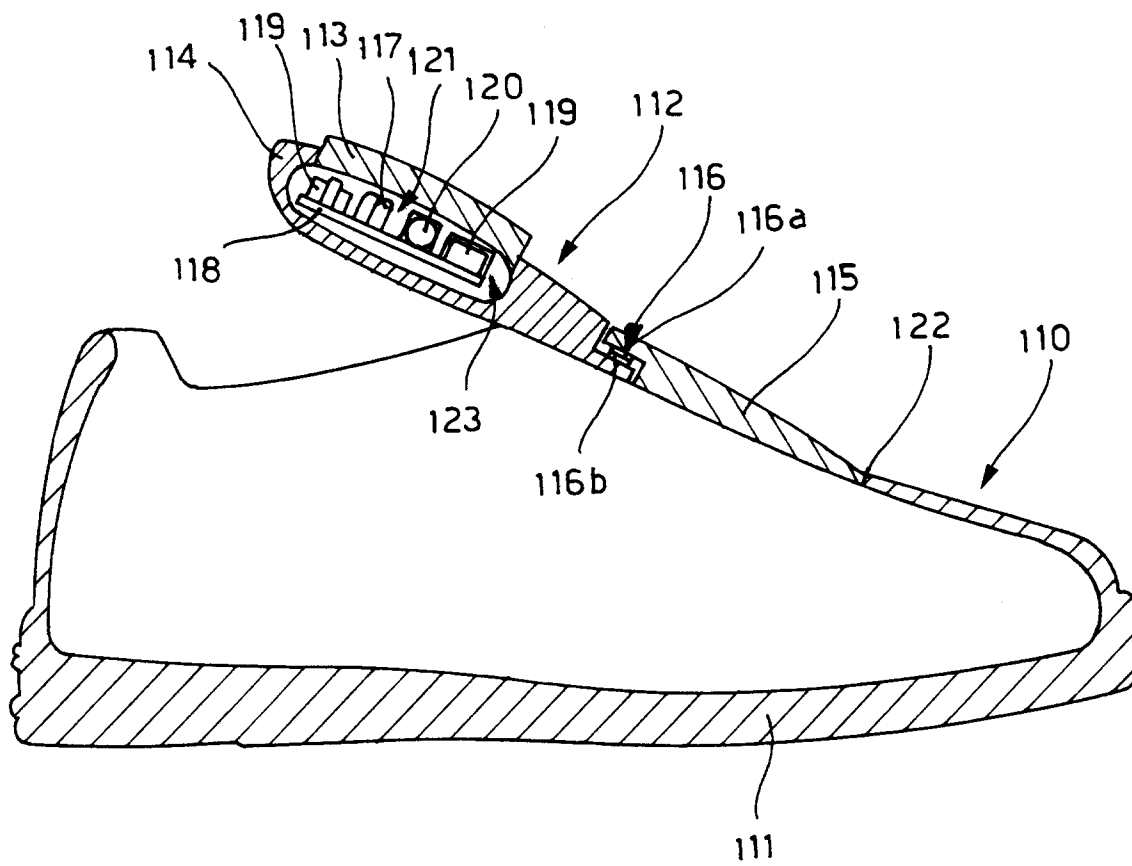


FIG. 7

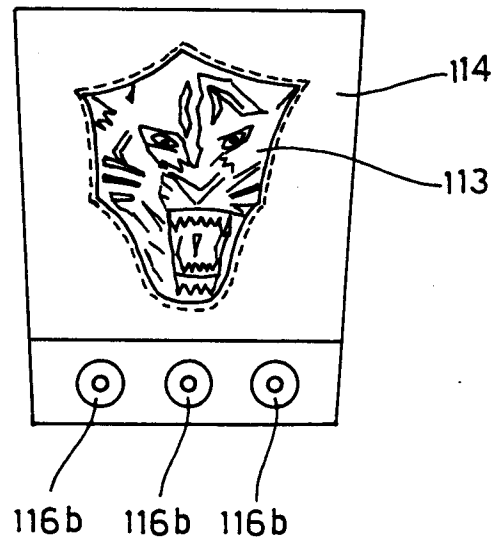


FIG. 8

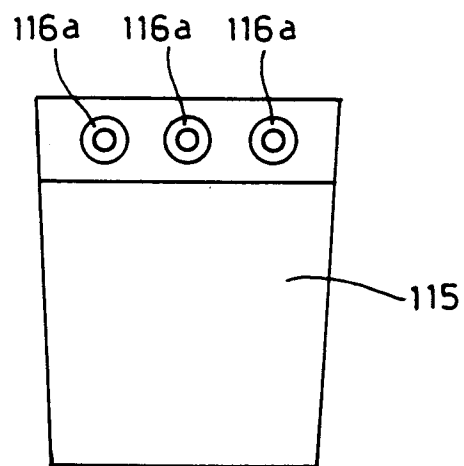


FIG. 9



European Patent
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EUROPEAN SEARCH REPORT

Application Number
EP 95 11 1504

DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT			
Category	Citation of document with indication, where appropriate, of relevant passages	Relevant to claim	CLASSIFICATION OF THE APPLICATION (Int.Cl.6)
X	US-A-5 329 432 (BLAND) * column 2, line 33 - line 46; figures * ---	1,3,4,9, 10, 14-17, 19,20	A43B3/00 A43B23/24 A43B23/26
X	US-A-4 805 321 (TONKEL) * column 2, line 5 - line 40; figures * ---	1,2,4,9, 10,12	
X	US-A-4 697 362 (WASSERMAN) * column 1, line 33 - line 44; figure 1 * ---	1,9-13	
X	FR-A-856 287 (WIEDEMANN) * page 1, line 26 - page 2, line 2; figures * ---	1,2,4,9, 10	
A	US-A-2 632 093 (DE MEROLIS ET AL) * column 4, line 16 - line 22; figures * ---	1-20	
A	DE-U-18 36 153 (WOLFERBORN) * figures * ---	1-13	TECHNICAL FIELDS SEARCHED (Int.Cl.6)
A	US-A-3 596 291 (THILL) * figure * -----	1-13	A43B
The present search report has been drawn up for all claims			
Place of search THE HAGUE		Date of completion of the search 6 November 1995	Examiner Scholvinck, T
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